

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Laura Cronquist

Epidemiologist, Division of Disease Control

Phone: 701.328.2378 Email: lcronquist@nd.gov

North Dakota Department of Health Provides Zika Virus Guidance for Travelers

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) offers guidance for residents who are contemplating or planning to travel to areas of the world where the Zika virus is being transmitted. Zika virus has been of special concern to pregnant women. An up-to-date list of destinations with confirmed Zika transmission can be found at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/zika. People are encouraged to check this website frequently when they are planning travel because these areas are likely to change over time.

Pregnant women should postpone, if possible, any travel to Zika affected areas until after the pregnancy. Women who are trying to become pregnant and their male partners should talk with their health care provider about whether they should reconsider travel plans to Zika affected areas.

"Most people who get infected with Zika virus either have no or only mild symptoms. However, there is a greater risk to a pregnant woman because Zika virus can spread to her unborn baby. Due to the potentially serious consequences of contracting Zika virus during pregnancy, diligent adherence to prevention measures is necessary," said Laura Cronquist, epidemiologist with the NDDoH.

Zika virus is primarily spread by tropical and subtropical mosquitoes. These mosquitoes also spread diseases like dengue and chikungunya. All travelers should protect themselves from mosquito bites by following these recommendations:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors
- Use <u>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered</u> insect repellents; when used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breast-feeding women

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200 Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

- Always follow the product label instructions
- Reapply insect repellent as directed
- Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent
- If you have a baby or child:
 - o Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age
 - o Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs
 - o Cover crib, stroller, and baby carrier with mosquito netting
 - Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin
 - o Adults: Spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to a child's face
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items
- Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings; see product information to learn how long the protection will last
- If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully
- Do NOT use permethrin products directly on skin; they are intended to treat clothing

After returning from Zika affected areas, the NDDoH recommends:

- Pregnant women should consult their health care provider and seek testing for Zika virus between two and 12 weeks after returning from a Zika affected area
- Men returning from Zika affected areas who have a sexual partner that is pregnant should either abstain from sexual activity or correctly and consistently use condoms for all sexual contact for the duration of the pregnancy
- Men returning from Zika affected areas that have non-pregnant sexual partners should consider abstaining from or correctly and consistently using condoms for all sexual contact
- All travelers should consult their health care provider if they develop illness, such as sudden onset of fever, rash, conjunctivitis (red eyes), joint pain, muscle soreness or pain, or headache, within 14 days of returning from Zika affected areas
- Travelers should not use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen
- To help prevent others from getting sick, avoid getting additional bites from other mosquitos during the first week of illness

More information regarding Zika virus can be found at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/zika. For more information, contact Laura Cronquist at lcronquist@nd.gov, or at 1.800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.

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